

PROPOSED DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE R-X

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given to
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1/10/63

The Air Force have programmed a new reconnaissance plane of high performance to be designated the R-X. The proposed R-X is to be developed as an outgrowth of the X-21, a secret experimental aircraft of very high performance and advanced technical concept.

The X-21 program was started in mid-1959 as the result of a proposal by Lockheed. Coupled with this was Lockheed's estimate that the job could be done within a significantly shorter period of time than is generally required and with the resultant savings in dollars. There were in this proposal several unique items of far reaching consequences to the defense posture of the United States, and it was therefore decided that any future steps taken in relation to this program would be on an extremely classified need to know basis.

Inasmuch as the structure and design of the proposal presented an entirely new approach and therefore appeared to have possibilities of meeting several Air Force requirements as an LRI (Long Range Interceptor) as well as considerable potential for a post strike reccy or reccy strike vehicle, it was decided to go ahead in early 1960 with a prototype program in the simplest configuration.

This also motivated the decision to continue the work on the ASG-18/GAR-9 fire control and weapon system originally slated for the now cancelled F-100.

In March of 1961 the program was reviewed by the present administration and the decision was made to continue under the same ground rules.

The Air Force for the first time in its history now finds itself in the singular position of having a vehicle of most advanced performance whose basic design readily lends itself to a diversity of purpose with only the most minor of modifications and little change in performance.

Taking advantage of this diversity the Secretary of Defense has decided that one of the major applications of the X-21 will be in the role of a strategic reconnaissance vehicle. In this role, the aircraft, now designated the R-X, will have a refueled range comparable to the unrefueled range of the RS-70, greater speed and altitude, and a smaller, but adequate, payload. At first the R-X will be designed simply as a reconnaissance aircraft. This is an important role for future manned strategic aircraft, and is required to give us a desirable strategic flexibility. Other applications for this remarkable aircraft will be developed in the near future.

It is anticipated that system testing of the X-21 will be done at Edwards Air Force Base commencing not before late Spring of 1963.